

TREATED WATER DISPENSING SYSTEM

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] Water purification devices which purify at slow rate, such as those which use the distillation and the reverse-osmosis processes, deliver water into a storage tank or reservoir from which the water is dispensed. The same is true in regard to systems which use bottled water and water filter dispensing coolers. The water, however, may be easily contaminated with bacteria by contact with air on the storage and dispensing mechanisms, or merely by sitting stagnant in the reservoir. This is particularly true with bottled water cooler dispensers and those units that are used as replacements for bottled water cooler dispensers since the tanks are non-pressurized, and therefore must be vented to permit water to be dispensed by gravity flow.

[0002] A known method for eliminating bacterial contamination is the use of ultra-violet ("UV") light. The light energy from a UV lamp is germicidal, because UV light penetrates microbial organism's protective membrane layer and photochemically damages the DNA structure, disabling its self-reproducing capability and rendering the cell lifeless.

[0003] UV light is in the region of the electromagnetic spectrum that lies between visible light and X-rays. The ultra-violet spectrum ranges from 100nm to 400nm wave lengths, with the optimum effective range between 250nm to 270nm. The UV lamp is commonly housed in a protective sleeve of quartz which is similar to a test tube that allows ultra-violet transmission and separates the lamp and wiring from the water surrounding the lamp.

The quartz sleeve also helps the UV lamp to maintain its optimal operating temperature of approximately 105° F. Factors that determine a UV system's effectiveness include the intensity of the lamp, the exposure time of the water to the ultra-violet rays and the water transmission rate which is determined by the quality and color of the water.

[0004] The typical storage reservoir for water purification units is not usually suitable for effective UV application. In gravity-filled storage reservoirs, there must be a method for controlling the water level within the reservoir, and typically a float valve or switch is used. With a UV bulb inside the reservoir, a float valve or switch would normally act as an obstruction to the UV light rays, and provide a sheltered location for bacterial contamination to grow. A typical size and storage capacity for a point of use reservoir is in the order of approximately 4 to 6 gallons, which is required to compensate for the slow recovery rate of the purification system.

[0005] Since UV has a limited effective transmission distance, the physical dimensions of a 4 to 6 gallon storage reservoir have not been suitable for effective UV application. A very high intensity UV lamp would be required in such cases and this would heat the chilled water thereby reducing the efficiency and effectiveness of the chilling process. Moreover, UV degrades most plastics, and typically in large reservoirs, floats and switches are constructed of plastic.

[0006] A typical point of use and bottled water dispenser reservoir is divided into two compartments by an internal baffle that separates the water which has been cooled from the

water that is still at room temperature. Two faucets are used, one for dispensing room temperature water and the other for dispensing chilled water. The baffle that separates the cold and room temperature sections blocks UV rays from reaching one of the compartments in such systems.

[0007] It has been observed in U.S. Patent No. 6,139,726 that the known prior art has not solved any of these problems. Although U.S. Patent No. 6,139,726 is a large improvement over the prior art, there still remains a need to reduce the cycling on and off of the UV bulb as well as the “on” time of the bulb as these factors degrade the life of the bulb. Co-pending U.S. Application No. 10/000,874, incorporated herein by reference, addresses this issue and others.

[0008] However, even with these improvements, there sometimes exists a need to utilize a larger wattage of UV lamp. Furthermore, a longer bulb would also provide a longer exposure time with thin film flow around the UV lamp and the quartz sleeve. A need exists to provide UV energy to areas previously inaccessible to the UV rays. A need also exists to detect leaks into the quartz sleeve about the UV lamp. Furthermore, a need exists to provide protection to a user in the event of breakage of a sleeve and/or lamp.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] Consequently, it is a primary object of the present invention to provide a water dispensing system for dispensing at least one of room temperature and chilled water which has been treated and purified by an ultraviolet source.

[00010] It is another object of the present invention to provide a water treatment tank having an ultraviolet energy source therein for effectively decontaminating at least one room temperature and chilled water which may be contained therein, the tank receiving water from a clean water source such as a distillation/condensation purifier, a point of use filtration source, a reverse osmosis purifier or a bottled water source.

[00011] It is a further object of the present invention to provide a water dispensing system including a treatment tank having an ultraviolet (UV) energy source in the form of a lamp for purifying the water therein, the water directed on the UV lamp in a laminar flow fashion with a reflector directing UV energy toward a dispensing portion of the system.

[00012] It is a still further object of the present invention to provide a water dispensing system including the treatment tank having an ultraviolet (UV) energy source in the form of a lamp for purifying the water therein, the water being exposed to UV rays while being added to the tank and periodically when not dispensing water from the tank, and while in portions of the outlets.

[00013] It is another object of the present invention to provide a water dispensing system including a treatment tank having an ultraviolet (UV) energy source in the form of a lamp contained in an encapsulating tube with a leak detector located in the tube.

[00014] Another object of the present invention is to provide a water dispensing system including a treatment tank having an ultraviolet energy source in the form of a lamp with

an outer vessel surrounding and then containing at least a portion of the lamp in the event of lamp and/or sleeve breakage.

[00015] It is a further object of the present invention to provide a leak detector proximate to the lamp which provides a signal to shut a solenoid operated valve to secure operation of the water dispensing system.

[00016] It is a still further object of the present invention to provide a water dispensing system including a treatment tank having a reflective surface which at least partially directs UV energy to otherwise obscured areas.

[00017] It is an object of the present invention to provide a dispenser that can display a number of days to service based on a daily usage level and a rated gallons of the limiting design components such as a filter or UV bulb.

[00018] It is an object of the present invention to provide an information center with a display to provide information to a consumer about the water filter purification system and/or filter utilized with the dispenser.

[00019] Another object of the present invention is to provide an updated display providing the amount of money saved by utilizing the dispenser over the cost of buying bottled water.

[00020] Another object of the present invention is to provide a self-sanitizing faucet which advantageously and periodically sanitizes water contained within the faucet to prevent contamination by bacteria or other contaminants.

[00021] Accordingly, the present invention provides a water dispensing system wherein water is treated by ultraviolet rays in a treatment tank to purify the water prior to being dispensed. Water entering into the treatment tank is directed so that it is channeled onto the UV lamp where it flows about the sleeve of the lamp in a thin film greatly increasing the ultraviolet exposure so that a low energy lamp may be effective even under full flow conditions. The lid of the tank may be extended to allow for a longer, and possibly, a larger wattage UV lamp. A reflector may be placed along the lid, which directs at least some of the UV light towards areas which would otherwise be obscured, such as within the outlet waterways.

[00022] An enclosing sleeve, or encapsulating tube, about the UV lamp maintains a moisture-free environment about the UV lamp. A leak detector is preferably located in the enclosing sleeve. An outer vessel extends about the enclosing sleeve. An outer vessel extends about the enclosing sleeve and/or surrounding sleeve to catch the sleeve(s) and/or lamp in the event of breakage. The leak detector provides a signal to the inlet valve to shut off the system in the event of breakage to prevent sleeve or lamp materials from being carried into the tank.

[00023] The treatment tank may have separating baffle which separates room temperature water from chilled water and the ultraviolet lamp extends into both compartments. Moreover, a transparent tube preferably formed from polytetrafluorethylene or the like extends through the chilled water compartment below the baffle and communicates the

room temperature water with the outlet faucet therefor. The water in the tube is thus radiated by the ultraviolet light emanating from the bulb while the room temperature water is within the tube waiting to be dispensed.

[00024] The dispenser also employs the use of information center which can provide a days until service display, as well as an information display showing the type of water purification system employed. Furthermore, the information center can display the amount of savings from using the dispenser as opposed to the cost of buying bottled water.

[00025] Furthermore, the preferred dispenser utilizes self-sanitizing faucets which provide an ability to elevate portions of the faucet to pre-determined temperatures for pre-determined periods of time in order to kill bacteria or other contaminants.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[00026] The particular features and advantages of the invention as well as other objects will become apparent from the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawing in which:

Fig. 1 is a prior art cooler;

Fig. 2 is a perspective view partly broken away and sectioned of a water dispenser constructed in accordance with the principles of the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a detailed view of the flow of water into the tank past a UV lamp in an alternatively preferred embodiment; and

Fig. 4 is an improved faucet design for use with water dispensers including the embodiments of Figs. 2 and 3.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[00027] Referring now to the drawing Fig. 1 illustrates a prior art water dispenser 10.

The dispenser 10 includes a housing 12 having a hollow interior including a base 14 and an exterior upstanding wall 16. In at least the lower portion of the housing above the base spaced inwardly from the wall 16 is a second wall 18. Tubing forming cooling coils 20 are received in a coiled condition between the walls 16 and 18, the coils 20 carrying coolant communicating with refrigeration apparatus (not illustrated) mounted within a bulbous portion 22 of the housing 12 preferably externally of the wall 16 for reasons which will hereinafter become clear.

[00028] Fastened to the interior wall 18 within the hollow interior of the dispenser is a baffle plate 24, the baffle plate preferably being constructed from stainless steel and having a substantially central opening 26 and a smaller offset opening 28. Extending downwardly through the opening 26 and having portions disposed both above and below the baffle 24 is an outer bulb 30, or tube, in which an ultraviolet lamp 132 is mounted, the bulb being a conventional fused quartz bulb such as a test tube. The bulb 30 extends through an upper lid 34 which covers and closes the hollow interior of the dispenser and the bulb is closed at

the upper end by a seal or grommet or other closure member **36** through which electrical conductors **38** pass outwardly to an electrical source (not illustrated).

[00029] Also extending through the baffle plate **24** is a transparent tube **40** which preferably is formed from polytetrafluorethylene sold under the trademark TEFLON (TM).

The tube **40** permits UV rays to pass therethrough and is not deteriorated by these rays.

The tube **40** extends into and through a nut **42** and through a washer **44** beneath the nut into the base where it communicates through tubing **46** connected to the nut **40** with a manually operable faucet valve **48**. Another nut **50** positioned on a washer **52** communicates through tubing **54** with another manually operable faucet valve **56**.

[00030] The baffle plate **24**, if utilized, divides the interior of the dispenser **10** into an upper compartment **58** and a lower compartment **60**. The baffle plate could be Teflon (TM), stainless steel or other appropriate material. Transparent and/or translucent baffle plates are not believed to be known in the art. Secured to the lid **34** and extending into the upper compartment **58** is a water supply tube **62** which may be connected to a source of potable water, which may be filtered water or bottled water. The end of the tube **62** within the dispenser is bent or angled at **64** so that the water **66** exiting the tube **62** is directed onto the bulb **30** about the ultraviolet lamp **132** which provides a thin film laminar flow about the bulb as described in U.S. Patent No. 6,139,726. This permits use of a low wattage ultra-

violet lamp and also insures that all of the water entering the dispenser is treated by the UV light rays.

[00031] Mounted within the upper chamber **58** carried by the lid **54** is a float switch **68** mounted within a shield **70**. As is the case with the baffle **24**, the shield **70** and the nuts **42**, **50** and washers **44**, **52** are constructed from stainless steel or other UV resistant material so as not to be affected by the ultra-violet rays. A vent tube **74** opening outwardly of the dispenser communicates air to the dispenser so that the water within the dispenser may flow by gravity. The lid **54** may also have a seal instead of, or in addition to, the vent tube **74** that prevents contaminants from getting into the reservoir and forcing air through an air filter that removes airborne contaminants.

[00032] As described, all of the elements within the dispenser **10** are typically constructed from quartz, stainless steel or TEFLON (TM) which do not deteriorate as a result of the ultra-violet rays of the lamp **132**. Moreover, the room temperature water within the upper compartment **58** communicates with the manually operable dispensing valve or faucet **48** through the tube **40** within which this water sits prior to opening of the valve **48**. Thus, UV rays act on the water within the tube **40** while the water is in the tube and as the water flows therethrough, thereby insuring that the water remains substantially free of bacteria and effectively pure until the water has exited the dispenser. The water within the lower compartment **60** is chilled by the cooling coils **20** and remains

substantially pure until dispensed through the dispensing valve **56**. Furthermore, by placing the float switch **68** within a stainless steel shield so that it need not be outside of the dispenser, the water may enter the dispenser directly for fast refill, and by channeling or directing the incoming water directly on to the UV lamp bulb so that it may flow around and contact substantially the entire surface of the bulb in a laminar thin film, the exposure of the water to UV rays is greatly increased even during fast refill and dispensing. This aids in permitting a low wattage UV lamp and reduces the cooling refrigeration requirements for the cooled water.

[00033] Figure 2 shows the preferred embodiment of the present invention without the baffle plate **24**. Of course, the baffle plate **24** could be utilized if desired in some embodiments. Here, the water entering the dispenser **100** again enters through the bent portion **164** of the tube **162** and is directed onto the sleeve **130**, or tube, disposed about the ultra-violet lamp **132** to provide a thin laminar flow of water, preferably 360 degrees, to treat the incoming water with UV light rays.

[00034] The level of the water within the dispenser **100** should be above the upper open end **328** of the tube **140** in order to dispense room temperature water. This may be accomplished by using a first probe **370** fastened to the lid **134** and projecting downwardly into the dispenser tank. The first probe **370** is preferably located along the wall **118** to prevent water from being located behind the probe **370** avoiding treatment by the lamp

132. The first probe **370** may be a stainless steel member having an electrical conductivity sensing device **372** at its tip which is within the dispenser **100** which detects when the water is at the level of the tip. The output of the first probe **370** is connected electrically by conductors **373** to a controller **80** connected to a normally closed solenoid **374** of a solenoid valve **376** which is mounted in the water line **378** between a source of water and the tube **162**. When the water level within the dispenser tank falls below the tip of the first probe **370**, a signal is received by the controller **80**.

[00035] The controller **80** is illustrated as an electronic component having at least a limited processor configured to receive inputs from at least one probe, and preferably a timer **90**, and provide output signals to the valve solenoid **374** and the switch **84**. This results in a signal being sent through the conductor **82** to switch **84** to activate the UV lamp **132**, since the lamp **132** is normally not activated as the switch **84** is normally in the off position.

[00036] After being activated, the lamp **132** reaches a desired operating temperature. Whether the lamp has reached the desired operating temperature may be evaluated by the controller **80** using a temperature measuring device located within the tube **130** and connected by conductor to the controller **80**, or by the passing of a predetermined amount of time from the activation of the lamp **132** as measured by a timer **90** which may be a part of the controller **80**. Of course, the temperature measuring device **86** is illustrated above

the anticipated high water level to avoid obscuring portions of the tank from treatment.

Upon reaching the desired operating temperature, the controller **80** sends a signal to the solenoid **374** to open valve **376** to begin filling the dispenser.

[00037] When the water reaches the level of the first probe **370** or float switch, the controller **80** will be aware that the minimum water level has been restored in the dispenser **100**. However, in order to minimize the cycling of the UV lamp **132** on and off, a second probe **92** may be fastened to the lid **34** and projects downwardly into the dispenser tank. The second probe **92** is preferably similarly constructed to the first probe **370**, except that the probe tip does not extend as deeply into the tank as the first probe **370**. The second probe **92** may also be located against the wall **118** to avoid creating areas which are not treated by the lamp **132**. Alternatively, instead of relying on the second probe **92** or possibly even utilizing a second probe **92**, the passing of a predetermined time from point of contact with the first probe **370** may be utilized to shut off the solenoid **374** and close the valve **376**. A restriction valve may be utilized on the water supply to ensure a regulated flow rate into the tank. The flow restrictor can prevent incoming flow from overfilling the reservoir. If the second probe **92** is not triggered in a predetermined amount of time, the controller switches off the solenoid valve **376** since there is obviously a leak in the tank. Furthermore, if the first probe **370** does not detect water in a predetermined amount of time, a leak condition may also exist and the valve **376** may be switched off.

[00038] The controller **80** is useful in detecting leaks from the water dispenser **10** in the preferred embodiment. In a case where water is leaking from a faucet **48,56** at full flow, the solenoid valve **376** would normally open and remain open because the reservoir could not refill. To detect this leak, the controller **80** preferably only allows the solenoid valve **376** to open for a maximum time limit. If the time limit is exceeded, the solenoid valve **376** will be closed by the controller **80** and an alarm would be activated to let the user know that a leak may have been detected. Water from these dispensers **10** is not dispensed continually, but dispensed on-demand when needed by the user. Water is usually dispensed periodically and at varying amounts so that continuous flow past a preset limit would not be a normal condition for a water dispenser **10** of the preferred embodiment.

[00039] When the solenoid valve **376** opens to refill the reservoir in tank **115**, the valve **376** opens fully and the water flows at a rate based on the water pressure and the restrictions within the water lines and solenoid valve **376**. In general terms, if a 12-ounce cup of water is drawn from the reservoir **115**, the amount of time required with the solenoid valve **376** to open to refill the 12-ounce volume will be constantly within some tolerance level. Leaks within the reservoir **115** or faucets **48,56** at less than full flow, even down to a drip leak will create a pattern of time that it takes to refill the reservoir **115** and a pattern of time that it takes for the water level to drop enough to activate the solenoid valve **376** to open. The controller **80** logs the “open” time interval and the “closed” time

intervals. The “open” and “closed” intervals (within a certain range) repeat, a set number of times, the controller **80** will activate an alarm mode and will not open the solenoid valve **376** again until the alarm mode has been de-activated by the user. The “repeat” pattern number can be as little as two or greater than five based on the performance desired.

[00040] When the water reaches the desired level such as the level of the second probe **92**, if utilized, a signal is sent to the controller **80**. The controller then sends a signal to the solenoid **374** to close the valve **376**. The switch **84** may then be turned “off” to deactivate lamp **132** after a first predetermined time. The distance between the tip of the first and second probes **370**, **92** is anticipated to hold a sufficient volume of water to reduce the cycling of the UV lamp **132** on and off. In the preferred embodiment, this volume would be about sixteen ounces, or about four cups of about four ounces of water. It is estimated that the number of lamp starts could be reduced up to about 80% thereby reducing the energy consumption of the dispenser and extending the life of the lamp **132**.

[00041] In the preferred embodiment, an information center **400** is mounted to the wall **118** or other appropriate location on the dispenser **100**. The information center **400** is utilized to convey information about the dispenser **100**. In fact, the information center **400** could be utilized with a UV type dispenser **100** as shown along with any type of water filtration or purification system known in the art.

[00042] The information center **400** is illustrated connected to the controller **80** and/or solenoid valve **83,81** such that the information center **400** can calculate and/or display the number of days to service the dispenser **100**. To calculate the number of days to service, the average daily usage of the dispenser **100** is calculated. A total amount of water dispensed may be subtracted from the rated life of the filter and/or purification method such as a lamp life of the UV bulb. The remaining life is then divided by the average daily usage to provide an anticipated number of days of service. This number may be displayed on the display **402** by pressing a status button **404** which initiates this calculation or otherwise provided. Average daily use of the filter system may be calculated by determining the amount of water dispensed. Information can be obtained as from the controller **80**, or from solenoid valves **81,83** or **376**. Time since the last service can be reset just by resetting the controller **80** or other appropriate component to reset the information center **400** upon completion of a service. Other methods can also be utilized to provide a number of days until next service.

[00043] In the preferred embodiment of the information center **400**, a second display can be provided on the screen **402** such as by pushing the second button **406**. Water treatment information may then be displayed on the screen **402**. The display can identify the type of filter or filters and/or purification means such as ultraviolet light, the wattage of the bulb or other pertinent information related to the type of water filtration provided by the dispenser

100. This could assist in informing a consumer about how the water has been treated that they have dispensed or are about to dispense from the dispenser **100**.

[00044] Additionally, the information center **400** may be utilized to provide an estimated cost savings display on the screen **402**. In the preferred embodiment, the third button **408** provides a signal to the information center **400** to calculate this savings. First, the cost of bottled water may be calculated and displayed based on a local regional and/or national cost of bottled water. Presently, it may be \$1.00 or more per gallon. The total cost of bottled water in five-gallon containers or otherwise is dispensed through a cooler usually has a monthly cooler rental fee as well as a per-gallon cost of delivered water and the sales tax on the cost of bottled water. Accordingly, the average cost per gallon may be calculated.

[00045] Next, the cost of the point of use system may be calculated as a monthly fee. By determining the amount of water dispensed by the dispenser **100** such as by the determined amount of water passing through any of the solenoid valves **83,81**, or **376**, the combination of the solenoid valves **83,81** or the solenoid valve **376**, or alternatively calculated by a controller **80** or other means, the amount of water passing through dispenser **100** may be calculated on a per-gallon basis and displayed relative to the local market price per gallon of bottled water on the screen **402**. Savings may be displayed in several views such as a total cost over the life of the dispenser such as by calculating the total amount of water

dispensed and the total number of days in service. Next, the difference in cost of the rental rates of the bottled water cooler and the point of view system could be calculated. This sum could either be added or subtracted from the per-gallon cost of the bottled water usage to provide a total cost savings on the screen 402. A savings per amount dispensed, per gallon or other view could also be provided.

[00046] Inside the encapsulating tube 130 is preferably located a leak detector such as electrode 86. The electrode is connected by connector 88 to the controller 80 so that in the event electrode 86 detects the presence of water in the encapsulating tube 130, the valve 374 may be shut off until the leak into the encapsulating tube 130 has been corrected. This also ensures that broken sleeves and lamp portions are not carried into the tank volume 115. The controller 80 may also shut off flow out of the tank through use of solenoid valves 81 and 83 upon the receipt of a signal from the leak detector. The electrical probe 86 detects if water has entered the encapsulating tube 130 so that none of the tube 130 or lamp 132 is carried into the tank volume 115 in the event of breakage (i.e., so that a user of the system 10 does not inadvertently dispense contaminated water from the tank, which may possibly contain sharp shreds from a broken lamp and/or sleeve or possibly mercury from a broken lamp). Ground fault interrupters (GRI's), fuse systems, or other appropriate devices known in the art may also be utilized as a portion of or with leak detectors.

[00047] A surrounding sleeve 110 may be utilized by some embodiments to force the laminar flow downwardly 360° about the tube 130 and then back up intermediate gap 112 created between the surrounding sleeve 110 and outer vessel 114 so that water can then spill over laminally the edge of outer vessel 114 flowing in a thin film downward and into the volume of the tank 118. This retains incoming fluid proximate to the lamp 132 for an extended distance and time duration. Furthermore, the surrounding sleeve 110 preferably extends a distance above the outer vessel 114 so that laminar flow may occur at least above the height of the outer vessel 114. The top of the outer vessel 114 is preferably located above the tip 372 of probe 370 and above the tip of probe 92.

[00048] The outer vessel 114 is preferably made of a transparent, non-breakable material such as TEFLON (TM) which prevents the quartz sleeve 110 and/or encapsulating tube 130 or lamp 132 materials from falling into the tank 118 in the event of breakage and also allows the UV rays to continue penetrating into water external to the outer vessel. The outer vessel 114 also generates laminar flow as water spills over into the tank volume 115. The outer vessel 114 may have a round, pointed, or other shaped base below the lamp 132 and/or sleeve 110.

[00049] The encapsulating tube 130 is preferably non-vented so that moisture from air does not condense inside the tube 130 thereby possibly contacting the leak detector 86 and triggering an alarm condition.

[00050] Also, shown in phantom is a spiral tube **116** which may be utilized in some embodiments to slowly and methodically provide water about the lamp **132**. While not utilized in the presently preferred embodiment, this feature could be advantageous in other embodiments.

[00051] Finally, reflective surfaces **122,123** are shown descending from lid **134**. The reflective surfaces **122,123** may also be a portion of the lid **134**. The reflective surfaces are preferably oriented to direct at least some of the UV light rays into at least portions of the tube **140**, cold water outlet **150** and faucet portions of the hot and cold faucets.

[00052] Although the prior art faucet designs **48,56** can be utilized, Figure 4 shows an improved and presently preferred faucet design **420**. This faucet design is a self-sanitizing water cooling faucet. This is believed to be helpful to prevent contamination by airborne bacteria viruses, or other contaminants. Prior art faucets can be contaminated by hand contact. The preferred faucet **420** employs stainless steel tubing **422** or other appropriate tubing material which can be heated with a heater such as with wrapped wire **424** as shown in Figure 4. A layer of insulation **426** is useful in containing the wrapped or heated tubing **422** when the temperature is elevated. By utilizing a controller **80** or other appropriate mechanism, the heater illustrated as wire **24** can elevate the temperature of the tubing **422** for a set period of time to or above a desired temperature (such as above 180°F. for a minute). This effectively sanitizes both the faucet and the waterway. Furthermore, this can

be utilized to eliminate any potential contamination of the water that is inside the faucet and the waterway.

[00053] The heating element **424** can be activated periodically such as every 12 to 24 or even every 48 hours depending on whether protection from contaminants is desired. This can be controlled automatically and electronically such as by the controller **80**, information center **400** or otherwise. An in-line shutoff valve such as solenoid valve **81,83** as shown in Figure 2 can be incorporated with this faucet design. These can close and open water passage through the tubing. As shown in Figure 4, a housing **428** or other appropriate cover or face plate can protect both hand contamination and prevent the consumer from contacting the tubing **422** or other internal components while the faucet **420** is undergoing the sanitizing cycle.

[00054] Numerous alterations of the structure herein disclosed will suggest themselves to those skilled in the art. However, it is to be understood that the present disclosure relates to the preferred embodiment of the invention which is for purposes of illustration only and not to be construed as a limitation of the invention. All such modifications which do not depart from the spirit of the invention are intended to be included within the scope of the appended claims.